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浅谈图式理论在口译中的应用：  
以典礼致辞口译为例

On the Application of Schema Theory in Interpreting:  
With Ceremonial Interpreting as a Case Study

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, researchers have explored numerous interdisciplinary fields to launch studies on interpreting. As a result, cognitive science, especially psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, has been introduced into studies on interpreting since scholars began to view interpreting as a complex mental activity that requires more explanations from the cognitive-scientific scope. Schema theory as one of the most influential theories in cognitive psychology has long been applied in analyzing various mental activities. With its emphasis on background knowledge, schema theory has been employed in studies on language acquisition, reading and listening comprehension. Consequent to the turn to cognitive-scientific approach in interpreting researches and the focus of schema theory on mental activities, schema theory began to be applied to interpreting studies as a constructive theoretical framework.

Among various kinds of interpreting activities, the interpreting of ceremonial speeches occurs frequently on business, diplomatic and many other official occasions. Being the most common public speeches in many cultures, ceremonial speeches have formed their unique features and ceremonial interpreting has become one of the most frequently practiced interpreting activities. Compared with other types of addresses, ceremonial speeches do not involve as profound or professional knowledge: the content of the speech is usually well planned beforehand hence systematically coherent and logical; the terms used are mostly formal and refined; the tone could be obviously emotive.

This thesis probes into the feasibility of applying schema theory to the process of interpreting. The interpreting of ceremonial speeches taken as a case study, the thesis is intended to elaborate on how schemata could play important roles in the process of interpreting. With an introduction to four types of schema applied in interpreting, namely linguistic schema, content schema, formal schema and cultural schema, the thesis then discusses schematic interpreting barriers and functions of



schemata in different phases of interpreting, and finally concludes with the feasibility of applying schematic strategies in the interpreting process, verifying that through activation of proper schema, schema modification (schema tuning) and schema reconstruction (schema creation), interpreting performance can be improved.

Through this study, the thesis aims at shedding some light on the application of schema theory in interpreting and further encouraging more interdisciplinary methodologies to be brought into future studies on interpreting.

**Key Words:** Schema Theory; Interpreting; Ceremonial Speeches

## 摘 要

近几年来,学者们纷纷在跨学科领域探索口译研究,许多学者开始把口译看作一项需要从认知科学的视野出发从而了解更多本质的复杂心理活动。认知科学,尤其是认知语言学和认知心理学由此被带进口译学科研究当中。图式理论是认知心理学中最具影响力的理论之一,长久以来被应用于各种心理活动的分析。图式理论以背景知识为理论重心,广泛应用于语言习得、阅读和听力理解等研究领域。自从认知科学被引入口译学科后,图式理论也开始进入口译研究的视线。

在林林总总的口译实践中,典礼致辞口译频频见于商业、外交以及其他正式场合。和其他类型的发言相比,典礼致辞独具特色,如不涉及过于高深的专业知识,演讲的内容往往计划性强、系统连贯、逻辑清楚、条理得当,致辞语言大多较为正式讲究,演讲者的语气往往带有较明显的感情色彩等等,因此成为最常见的公众演讲方式,也使得典礼致辞口译成为最常见的口译类型之一。

本文探究了把图式理论应用在口译过程中的可行性。作者以典礼致辞口译为例对图式在口译过程中发挥的重要作用展开阐述。本文介绍了四种应用于口译的图式,即语言图式、内容图式、结构图式和文化图式;探讨了口译过程中可能出现的图式障碍以及图式在口译不同阶段所扮演的角色;最后得出如下结论:通过图式激活、图式修订和图式重建,口译的质量能得到有效提高。

作者希望本文能让更多人了解图式理论及其在口译学科中的应用,对未来的研究做出绵薄之力。

**关键词:** 图式理论 口译 致辞演讲

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background**

In the long history of social development and language practice, interpreting has played a fundamental role in bridging the gap between different languages and culture. Where there is mankind, there is communication. Although time has witnessed changes of human societies, different barriers persist among communications between different human races, no matter how advanced scientific technology has become and how prosperous cultures have evolved. In the contemporary world where human beings' living space has been transformed into a "global village", people's desire to overcome obstacles and communicate freely with each other has never been stronger. The trend of globalization has brought about rising international exchanges in areas such as politics, economy, culture and education. Interpreting, therefore, has emerged as a useful instrument to make sure the smooth function of contacts between different countries.

Nowadays, there have been heated discussions among scholars concerning theories and practice of interpreting. In addition to traditional study methods considering interpreting to be the oral form of written translation, thus sharing the common theoretical background (Pöchhacker, 2004; Chesterman, 2006), scholars started to realize that it's necessary to take into consideration many other factors that might work on this complicated mental activity. Researchers thus began to conduct cultural-oriented studies and interdisciplinary fields, reckoning interpreting as a complex cognitive process which combines factors such as competence of language skills, background knowledge, cultural contexts, pragmatic restrictions and mental functions. In search of more scientific methodologies, scholars resorted to cognitive science and its relevant disciplines. From the perspective of cognitive science, especially psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, researchers have found more explanations for the functional mechanism of interpreting process.

Being one of the most important parts of cognitive psychology, schema theory has long been applied to analyze different levels of mental activities. With its emphasis on background knowledge, schema theory has been brought into studies on language acquisition, especially on reading and listening comprehension, and resulted in meaningful achievements, which in turn inspired some scholars to introduce schema theory into interpreting studies by means of analyzing what roles schema theory may play during the process of interpreting and how it could affect interpreting performance.

## **1.2 The Purpose and Significance of the Thesis**

From the previous studies on interpreting, it is found that most researches mainly discussed interpreting as a product-based rather than process-based activity, and that studies have been mostly conducted in aspects such as interpreting strategies, methodologies for interpreting training and the evaluation of interpreting performance, while few have elaborated on the process of interpreting, or have explored mental activities of interpreters to find out how they could improve their interpreting performance. Besides, little has been done on the role that background knowledge might play in the process of interpreting, not to mention that there are less papers discussing interpreting in light of schema theory.

Of all the researches made upon interpreting, the discussions on the interpreting of ceremonial speeches are still sparse, despite of their frequent application on business, diplomatic and other official occasions and recognition as one of the most common type of interpreting activities (宋颀, 2008; 朱巧莲、张楠, 2009; 吴玲娟、刘金龙, 2010). Hamilton (2009: 131) demonstrates that “the ceremonial speech in the form of a eulogy, wedding or retirement toast, etc. is the kind of speech most likely to be given by everyone at some point in their lives, as opposed to a formal persuasive speech, for example”. With the unprecedentedly prosperous social development, people from different social groups have an increasing need to contact with each other due to various reasons; they get together on numerous occasions, hence organizing



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